Country Statement

"Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific"

Agenda item 3

Tuesday 22 April 2025 from 09:00 am to 5:00 pm

ESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok.

Madam Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends

"Iakwe"

I wish to extend greetings from the People of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

As we all strive to meet our sustainable development goals, we are all interconnected with various challenges in many forms, whether it be global epidemics, border conflicts, or natural disasters like earthquakes and typhoons. Financial constraints, migration challenges, and even a change in the climate, all these add challenges to our SDG commitments and our effort to build resilient and sustainable urban communities. The Marshall Islands share these same challenges.

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, the importance of multilateralism cannot be overstated, and the Marshall Islands believes it is through multilateral frameworks such as ESCAP, we can all come together to address our shared challenges—whether combating climate change, ensuring global health security, promoting sustainable development, or safeguarding peace and stability. Multilateralism fosters dialogue over division, cooperation over competition, and inclusivity over isolation.

The Marshall Islands, one of only 4 atoll nations in the world, with the other three being Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Maldives, is currently going through its draught season. With the scarcity of rainfall and seawater seeping into our well due to the rising sea level, providing drinkable water is a challenge, but with the support from UNDP and other UN agencies, our urban and rural communities are doing fine.

When we try to develop our urban communities to provide for the majority of our people, sometimes our rural communities receive the proper support, whether in health, education, or even simple communications between families. Last year, the International Telecommunication Union introduced a Smart Island pilot project to one of the remote communities in the Marshall Islands. Through the use of the internet, although still at its infant stage, the project presents the opportunity for the rural communities to receive virtual support with medical support and counseling, virtual education, online commerce, and an avenue where our remote communities can communicate with the rest of the world.

For an island nation, the transportation of people, goods, and services to the many remote island communities presents a very big challenge. With the ever-rising price of fuel, this exacerbates

this challenge. As a nation that prides itself as the last great ocean navigators, we turned to what had always aided us for millennia, the wind in our sails. The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) supported the Marshall Islands in building a wind-propelled cargo ship that also utilizes solar energy and has all the latest navigational technology installed. This cargo ship, the Juren Ae, is a manifestation of a clean, green, very sustainable mode of transport that good cooperation can bring forth.

These are just a few of the many challenges we face in the Marshall Islands, and just a few of the UN agencies and multilateral friends that extended us their support. We could not bear all these challenges alone. Fortunately for us and our neighbors in the Pacific, we can always count on the ESCAP regional office and many crop agencies for their unwavering support. No single country can effectively tackle the complexities of today's global challenges alone. Through multilateral institutions and partnerships, we can pool our strengths, share knowledge, and build collective resilience. Upholding the principles of multilateralism is not just a diplomatic necessity—it is a moral imperative for building a fairer, safer, and more sustainable future for all. It is thanks to frameworks such as the ESCAP and the cooperation of everyone here that makes all our challenges much more bearable. Thank you.

Lastly, I wish to extend my thanks and deep appreciation to the governments of Australia, Thailand, Canada, Brunei Darussalam, and New Caledonia for their generous contributions and continued support to the Pacific Trust Fund which has funded and made it possible for Ministers such as myself and many others to join and be among this august company here today.

Thank you, and God bless all our countries and our United Nations. Kommol tata.